



## TIPS When Applying for Social Security Disability Benefits as an Adult

Before applying to the **Social Security Administration (SSA)** for social security disability benefits you should review the **disAbility Law Center of Virginia's** publication entitled: **Considering Applying for a Social Security Disability Benefit?** This will help you determine if you are a good candidate for these benefits and, if so, whether to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) which is for adults only and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) which is for children or adults. These guides will help you understand the process and what to expect. If you are applying for a child see our guide called **TIPS When Applying for SSI for Children**

### Ways to apply for SSDI and/or SSI

#### To apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI):

- To **apply online** go to the following Social Security Administration link:

<https://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/>

This is the fastest way to apply. The process is secure and user-friendly and will guide you every step of the way. You will be given a PIN number to re-enter as often as it takes to complete the application.

Or, you may:

- **Schedule an appointment** with a local Social Security office by calling Social Security Administration's national toll-free number **1-800-772-1213** from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday or go to your local social security office to ask for an appointment. Most of these are telephone appointments so you don't have to leave your home. You will receive a confirmation letter with a list of the information needed to apply. Be sure to gather all information before the appointment. You will sign a form that allows SSA to collect the actual records.

If you are **deaf or hard** of hearing call TTY 1-800-325-0778 or go here to learn how to communicate with SSA:

<https://www.ssa.gov/people/deaf/>

If you are **blind or vision impaired** go here to learn how to communicate with SSA:

<https://www.ssa.gov/people/blind/>

If you will require a **foreign language interpreter** go here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/multilanguage/interpreter.html>

### **To apply only for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for adults:**

Social Security does not offer the online application for SSI applicants (for children or adults). But you can request an appointment to apply by going here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/>

You will receive an appointment confirmation letter with a list of the information needed to apply. Be sure to gather this information before the appointment. SSA usually conducts this appointment by telephone.

### **Tips When Applying for SSDI and/or SSI as an Adult**

- If you currently have less than \$2000 in resources (cash or things that can be turned into cash) you should apply for both SSDI and SSI. The SSI can cover the 5-month waiting period for SSDI and add to a low SSDI payment.
- In general, SSA will expect you to supply information about your medical conditions, where and when you have received treatment, and your work history over the last 15 years. Social Security does not require you to collect your records for your claim. You will sign a release form that gives SSA permission to collect them.
- Provide complete answers to ALL questions.
- Include ALL doctors (including psychiatrists) and hospitals used to treat your disabilities to include the addresses, dates of service and diagnostics, and reason for visit or hospitalization. Other treating sources should also be included such as mental health therapists, physical therapists, and chiropractors.
- Include a complete list of ALL medications with the correct dosage and reason for taking. Be sure to state side effects of each medication if any.
- Include a complete job history providing all information requested and include the reason for leaving a job especially if it is disability related. If you have not worked recently or had interruptions in work due to our disability, explain why.

- Under the Vocational Section include the name of any vocational agency you have worked with.
- When you receive the **Function Report** be sure to fill it out completely and provide examples of things you can no longer do, can only do in a limited way, or for which you need help. Describe your symptoms and limitations as they exist on your worst day, not your best day. Use the “Remarks Section” to add any other information about your inability to perform daily activities and perform **any** work. This form is due within 10-days of when you received it. Don’t delay!
- To check on your case, or add new evidence, call the Examiner at Disability Determination Services (DDS). Their name and number is in the letter they send when they notify you they have received your application. Or, you can find the number to the closest DDS office using this web address: <https://www.vadds.virginia.gov/>. If you are calling on someone’s behalf they must be with you to give DDS permission to discuss their application.
- If SSA schedules a medical appointment for you (at their expense) you must go but you can change to a more convenient time. If you need to cancel or reschedule call the DDS Examiner using the method above.
- Meet ALL deadlines and, if denied, appeal for “**reconsideration**” within the 60 days allowed. To appeal you may return to your online application or call the toll free number 1-800-772-1213. If you miss this deadline for a good reason you have a right to ask for an extension. This is called “good cause for late filing”. Otherwise, you will have to re-apply.
- If your claim is denied a second time, file the appeal called “**Request for Hearing by an Administrative Law Judge**” within 60-days and seek representation as soon as possible.
- A hearing will be scheduled but this may take up to a year or more. The judge at the hearing expects you to have representation (or an advocate). You may want to review the dLCV publication entitled: “**TIPS When Appealing a Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income Claim**”. This guide explains the appeal process and provides links to SSA’s appeal forms.

Note: The disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV) does not provide representation.

